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California State Senate

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CHAIR,
ALAMEDA CORRIDOR EAST

July 20, 2004

Terry Tamminen
Agency Secretary
California Environmental Protection Agency
P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, CA 95812-2815

Dear Secretary Tamminen:

Terry

Four years ago, I introduced legislation (Senate Bill 89, Chapter 728, Statutes of 2000) to create an interagency working group on environmental justice and an advisory committee with a diverse membership to serve as a resource to Cal/EPA. Today, I am pleased to comment on the draft "Intra-agency Environmental Justice Strategy," which has resulted from the multi-year collaboration among the Cal/EPA Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice, the 17-member Advisory Committee on Environmental Justice, and various stakeholders.

I commend you on your draft "Intra-agency Environmental Justice Strategy." Your insightful, July 2004 draft identifies Cal/EPA's mission, vision, core values, and strategic objectives "to guide environmental programs, policies, and activities" to achieve environmental justice. However, I am concerned that the draft document does not specifically mention a strategic objective to address environmental justice issues through permit-related processes. Because the permitting process appears to be key in protecting disadvantaged communities from environmental hazards, I hope that you will consider this addition.

I also encourage you to identify more specifically how the Interagency Working Group will continue to collaborate with the Advisory Committee to ensure the implementation of the final intra-agency strategy. The Advisory Committee report on recommendations to achieve environmental justice demonstrates not only a shared commitment to the task, but also the benefits of model collaboration. With an in-depth understanding of the environmental justice issues facing California, the Advisory Committee is a valuable resource to Cal/EPA. You may wish to consider amending the draft environmental justice strategy to include a description of the Advisory Committee role in Cal/EPA's environmental justice efforts.

Clearly, we share a common vision to ensure all Californians, including those in disadvantaged communities, a clean and healthy environment. Your draft environmental justice strategy turns the definition of "environmental justice" into strategic action. I look forward to our continued partnership with the Advisory Committee to ensure that the strategic actions outlined in your draft result in the integration of environmental justice into our public health and environmental protection programs, policies, and permit-related and other activities.

Sincerely,

M. Escutia

Martha M. Escutia
Senator, 30th District